

# Talking with Ann and Sasha Shulgin

## On the existence of God and the pleasures of sex drugs

Interviewed by Jon Hanna and Sylvia Thyssen

**Jon:** A mutual friend of ours once told me that he thought one of the primary motivations you had for investigating new compounds was that you were looking for drugs that went well with sex.

**Sasha:** Um-hmm. This is not an insignificant portion of my investigations. You're familiar with a good range of psychedelic drugs, presumably, along with spirituality and sex in your own world. Indeed some of the materials make a very good, close interaction possible. And a very intimate interaction. But blatant eroticism isn't always present; it depends on the particular drug you're using. So that is another area that needs definition. Just as the word "spirituality" has to be defined, so does "sexuality." Let's go back to that. What is spirituality? What do you mean by spirituality?

**Jon:** Some connection with what people consider "God."

**Sasha:** Oh! You have to believe in God to be spiritual?

**Sylvia:** I wouldn't agree with that.

**Sasha:** I know. So what is the underlying definition, or the concept, of spirituality. And there's the same question with sex.

**Jon:** Okay, so this leads to another question that I wanted to ask you, which relates to spirituality. You have created what people now refer to as "the Shulgin Scale." And as a way to describe the action of psychoactive materials, this scale ranges from the "minus" up to the "plus-four."

**Sasha:** Well, "plus-four" is really not a part of the scale.

**Jon:** Right. And that is an issue that a lot of people have misunderstood. It really goes up to "plus-three." "Plus-four" is a magical sort of mind state...



**Sasha:** A completely different place. And there is maybe where you play with spirituality, but also you play with power.

**Jon:** ...which I believe has been described as a "oneness with God."

**Sasha:** In one of my two or three "plus-four" experiences—where suddenly you are *running* the show, you are God, you are whatever it is—I was walking over towards the lab, just amazed,

and we had a little cat up the hill a ways. And I looked at the cat, and somehow I got the cat to look at me. And that cat just bolted right up the hill as far and as fast away from me as it could go. I just, you know, gave it the message... not verbally. I could do that kind of thing. I could make a damn hose wrap in another way, lying on the ground... If you can make a cat run away from you out of total fear—is that God?

**Jon:** So you've had a few of these experiences.

**Sasha:** Um-hmm.

**Jon:** And yet I've also asked you in the past about your belief in God, and you've told me that you're an atheist.

**Sasha:** Probably. That's probably the better word. Because one thing I think is that many people dump a lot of their own problems by blaming them on God. Or they say they blew up an Israeli hamburger stand because of God...

**Ann:** But that's got nothing to do with what you might think God is. You're talking about religious beliefs.

**Sasha:** The big joker up there with the beard, pointing down to us...

**Ann:** Right, but there's no such thing. And you don't believe in that.

**Jon:** *But my question for you—and everyone who believes in God probably has a different image of what they believe God is—but as far as calling yourself an atheist, this would deliver the message that you don't believe that there is a God. And yet at the same time, you've had a few of these “plus-four” God-like experiences. You just said during such an experience you are God—you can jolt a cat up a hill or change a hose around. So how are those two positions reconciled?*

**Sasha:** Well, to have a “God-like” experience, you’re describing the experience, not God. So it’s a term I can use to communicate with you. If I stopped a woman on a sidewalk of San Francisco, and asked: “What do you think of the research that’s done on the entheogens?” I’d get a “Huh?” So, if I change and say, “What do you think about psychedelics?” I’d actually get some kind of answer. So to use a phrase “God-like experience,” is a form of communication.

**Jon:** *Okay. How about “becoming God,” or “a connection with God?” Connecting with something that could be considered a “higher power” than what one’s own power is.*

**Sasha:** I’ll ask you a question then. Do you believe that there would be such a thing as God if there was no one who was intelligent enough to ask the question? There’s no humans, only animals. Is there a God?

**Jon:** *Well, I do believe in God...*

**Sasha:** That’s not my question.

**Jon:** *Okay, well... I’m only saying that as background. Yes, I think that there still would be a God, whether...*

**Ann:** Do you find that *our* minds created, what it is that we think of as God?

**Jon:** *Man created God in his image.*

**Sasha:** Um-hmm. Big gray beard pointing down...

**Ann:** *That* one, yes. But is there any larger consciousness than the ones we are aware of?

**Sasha:** I’m going to answer that in a very oblique way. I think there is a *single* consciousness; all of us here.

**Ann:** That there *is* a single consciousness.

**Sasha:** Um-hmm.

**Jon:** *And that, I think, is what... many people consider that to be God.*

**Sasha:** Okay, if they want to embrace that, I have no objections.

**Ann:** But, that’s what he’s *asking!*

**Sasha:** Well, I know. I’m answering as best I can. I’m trying to think of a way of answering that is in keeping with my own belief systems. If you have a single consciousness, God would be that. Yeah. And there’s another thing—the idea of the fine line between having time pass and having separations between things. Or having no time at all and having everything be simultaneous, where you have no meaning to time at all. We live in both of these worlds. And I think the latter world is one probably people would say is a definition of God: The entire operation, with no time passing whatsoever—absolute concurrence.

**Jon:** *And that is something that you can gain glimpses of on psychedelics.*

**Sasha:** Um-hmm.

**Ann:** That’s a perfectly good definition of God. It just doesn’t happen to be the classic, usual...

**Jon:** *Yet even with that definition, you personally wouldn’t want to call that God.*

**Sasha:** I might...

**Sylvia:** *That’s why we didn’t call this issue, “Sex, God, and Psychedelics.”*

**Jon:** *So, I guess this returns us to the definition of “spirituality,” a word that can perhaps be more loosely defined than “God,” and which may even be acceptable to atheists. Some people just don’t like the “G-o-d” word.*

**Ann:** But Sasha, you’re *not* an atheist. An atheist really is... *agnostic* is a better word.

**Sasha:** Well, I’m playing with the balance between atheism and agnosticism.

**Ann:** Agnostics say, “I really don’t know.”

**Sasha:** I really don’t know. I have my own *opinions*, and they’re not very positive...



**Ann:** An atheist is basically someone who says, "This is the material world, there is absolutely nothing else..."

**Sasha:** No, no. I'm not an atheist from that definition.

**Ann:** Okay.

**Sasha:** Agnostic is always safe.

**Sylvia:** Sure.

**Sasha:** Well, the entire Western world has had a plethora of Gods for a few hundred years—is that okay? I mean, that God can take many forms?

**Jon:** *We still do have 'em. Yeah, I don't have any problem with God taking many forms. And I guess that goes back to what you were saying with your ideas being right for you. It's only when you're trying to persuade someone else that your way is the one right way that we get into problems.*

**Sylvia:** *I didn't really think we were going into this project having a clearly-defined operational definition for "spirituality," we'll just let people feel inclined to respond in whatever way they want. The response may be, "Well what do you think spirituality is?" Which gets into a discussion that can be important to have.*

**Jon:** *Moving back to the sexuality aspect of our topic, since we sort of got side-tracked on spirituality...*

**Sylvia:** *It's all the same thing.*

**Jon:** *Well, it is all related. So, Ann, when you were away for a moment, Sasha related a comment that he said you might not want to be quoted on—"nothing can ruin an intimate moment like an erection," or something like that.*

**Ann:** (laughing) That takes a little bit of explaining. I think that we'll deal with that in the next book. Okay, this is off the record or on the record?

**Jon:** *Well, you can say it's off the record, or...*

**Ann:** That's okay—I can put it delicately, I guess. When you get to a certain age, for a man, erections are a little hard to come by.

**Jon:** *Ask Bob Dole.*

**Ann:** I mean, you plan on living into your 80s or 90s? What you find out, if you have a good partner who will go exploring with you, is that this doesn't mean that you can't have orgasms. So the whole idea of Viagra® and Bob Dole... the older man's erection is a kind of "in between" state. The only

thing is that the average male thinks of the erection as kind of "the male symbol." It is not necessary to get a full erection in order to have orgasm. So then we come to oral sex; if you pursue oral sex when you are older, you can have a fantastic sex life. Some people... there are a lot of people in the Owl Club who are in their 60s, who don't *do* anything any more, probably because their wives say, "I'm not going to do that." And I am pleased to say that we have a rolling sex life, and we're in our 70s.

**Sasha:** Have you ever encountered the term "foxy methoxy" on the Internet?

**Jon:** *Sure, yeah. 5-MeO-DiPT.*

**Sasha:** Have you ever tried it?

**Jon:** *I did try it one time...*

**Sasha:** Probably a full dose?

**Jon:** *...but I wasn't in a particular situation where I was able to explore the "foxy" side of it.*

**Sasha:** Well, actually at the regular full dose—12 or 15 mg, I don't know how much you used—it is not a terribly satisfactory psychedelic.

**Jon:** *Right. I agree.*

**Sasha:** However, if you ever have a chance, try 6 mg.

**Ann:** Now, for a *young* person, it may not be the same...

**Sasha:** It may not be, okay. But 6 mg... it does not help erections one damn bit, at all; you're still on your own in that area. But if you get to the point of orgasm, it's explosive. It's almost scary! Small amounts intensify orgasm. Not for Ann, but for me. Is it a male/female thing? I don't know.

**Ann:** I really don't know. That's one of the things that we have to find out. And it may not be every man, but I suspect that it is effective more for older men than for anyone else, that's why it hasn't gotten much feedback from young researchers.

**Sasha:** So there's an example. Is that a sexy drug? Well, no. Well, I don't know. It depends. And for whom? And under what circumstances? What age and what sex? I don't know.

**Jon:** *Which of all the many different drugs do each of you feel is the most compatible for sexual relations.*

**Sasha:** You mean the physical performance or the intimacy?

**Jon:** Both.

**Sasha:** Well, then, there are many different drugs for different things.

**Ann:** Yeah, that is very tricky. That's something that we're going to have to make much clearer in the next book, because the relaxation and disinhibition effect of many psychedelics is what most people respond to. If you're in a sexual situation what you want is that un-tension. A dropping of the tension and the over-activity of the intellect—you know, the "let go" thing. And most psychedelics do that. MDMA, of course, doesn't let you *do* anything.

**Jon:** Well, *I don't agree with that. Going back to what you were saying about having an orgasm without having an erection; with MDMA, for me, that's the way to go. And it's true that one cannot get—or at least I haven't been able to get—completely full erections, yet it is still a fabulous compound and the intimacy is there. But you have to work on it; you can't give up. Some people get tired or worn out...*

**Ann:** In general, and politically, there's this whole emphasis that MDMA is a "club drug." And club drugs are commonly thought of as something that you can pop into somebody's drink and they become amnesiac, they lose control, and they can get raped, and whatever. Well, MDMA is *none* of those things. It's a *love* drug, but it's not a sex drug, as most people think of sex. And it really takes effort. Leave the sex for another time.

**Jon:** Well, *I think it's a worthwhile effort...*

**Ann:** Yeah... but with the other psychedelics, I think... there are very few psychedelics that you *can't* make love on, if you find the right dose.

**Sasha:** There are some that are very body-oriented, like 2C-B for example.

**Ann:** 2C-B, and LSD for most people. But you *have* to find the right dosage level, otherwise you're going "way out there." And that's the trick. Ketamine—we know people who are very successful making love with that...

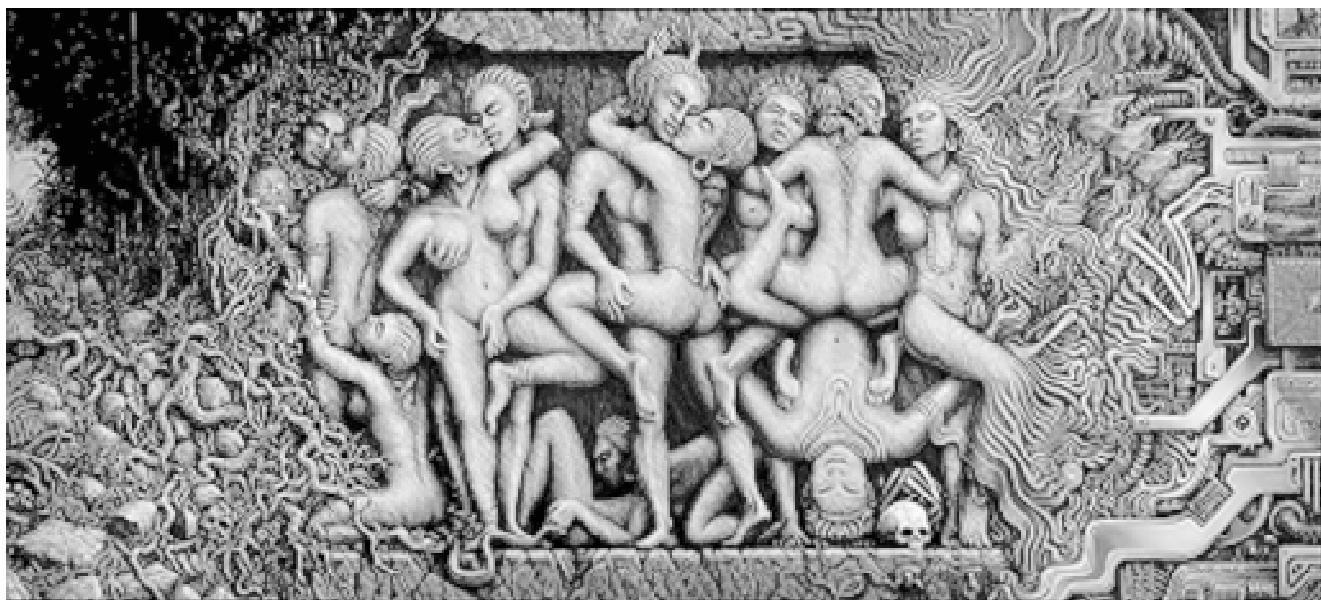
**Sasha:** And I know people who don't even know where their body *is* while on ketamine.

**Ann:** Yeah, but that's the dosage again. You stay pretty low. I haven't taken it at all, so...

**Sasha:** When you're out there in the outer galaxies, observing the beauty of the world and God and all that sort of thing... as our Secret Chief once said of ketamine, "It's amazing, you know somewhere, you know someone who has a full bladder, but you don't give a shit." It's not your concern, it's *his* concern... So with this sort of separation, there's no meaning to sex.

**Ann:** On the other hand, if you consider the famous temple in India, which is full of every conceivable sex position that anyone could take, that is a temple illustrating—as I understand it—one of the ways to attain the God-head. It makes it very clear that this is one of the ways you get there: sex. So you cannot really divorce the sexual from the spiritual, because if you get in the right space with the right person and can open up the right things, they *are* one-and-the-same.

**Sylvia:** Agreed! Thanks for taking the time to speak with us for MAPS. .



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**TEMPLE TRANSMUTATION, 1997, oil on canvas**